

An aerial photograph of a rural town. In the upper left, a white church with a tall steeple is visible. To its right, a large white house sits on a green lawn. Further right, a road runs horizontally, with several smaller houses and buildings on either side. The foreground is dominated by a large, dark green field. The overall scene is lush with greenery and trees.

community
workshop

YOUR TOWN:
DESIGNING
ITS FUTURE

A RURAL COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP AND FOLLOW-UP CASE STUDIES

FUTURE



*"It was by far the best conference I have ever been to.
I have learned so much."*

AURORA, NEW YORK, 1995

IN MY TRAVELS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, I have been struck over and over again by how important the arts are to the lives of our communities. That is particularly clear in small towns and rural communities whose natural beauty, history, and traditional arts celebrate their survival in the face of extraordinary changes in our nations—fact, the world's—economy.

When I visited Nebraska, home of my grandfather, Daniel Quigley, Buffalo Bill's personal physician, I reflected on the role that the sheer size and variety of our landscape played in shaping our culture. The arts convey a sense of place, whether in a song of the mountains or the Blues from the Delta, a native American hoop dance or a Mariachi band, a quilt or lace, a play or a festival.

Through several initiatives at the Endowment, I have sought to highlight how the arts can contribute to the quality of life in our rural communities. We have worked with the Department of Agriculture's National Rural Development Partnership to underscore the role of the arts in rural community development. Through partnerships with the Forest Service and the National Park Service, we have supported an exciting variety of arts-based rural community development projects. With Partners in Tourism, an alliance of national cultural service organizations, we have worked to stimulate cultural/heritage tourism throughout the nation. Through our regular grantmaking programs and through our partners, the state arts agencies, we continue to provide support for the arts in rural communities. And, each year, we honor folk and traditional artists across our land—many from rural areas—with our Heritage Awards.

I am proud of all the Endowment's efforts to serve rural America. *Your Town: Designing Its Future* is our best effort to help small towns and rural communities understand the importance of design and identify resources to help them preserve their heritage and identity while expanding their economy. We, at the Endowment, are grateful for the fine work of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in this important task, and we look forward to continuing this service to rural America.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Alexander", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jane Alexander,
Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts



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YOUR TOWN

FORWARD

Your Town: Designing Its Future is a program of workshops to teach rural community leaders about the importance of design in planning. Developed by the Rural Heritage Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York at Syracuse, *Your Town* has been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts since 1991. By 1997 fifteen *Your Town* workshops had been produced around the country, and at least four more will take place in 1998. Nearly 440 participants from thirty-eight states have attended the workshops.

This publication introduces you to the *Your Town* program and describes some of its successes through four case-study communities. Each of the rural towns highlighted sent one or more participants to a *Your Town* workshop and as a result experienced real changes in the appearance, morale, and dynamics of the community. The four case studies illustrate that the *Your Town* program can have long-term, significant impacts—both on the participants who attend the workshops and on the communities in which they work and live.



DESIGNING ITS FUTURE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to Jane Alexander, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, for the Endowment's steady support of the *Your Town* program. In addition we gratefully acknowledge the staff of the Endowment who participated in the workshops over the years: Jeff Soule, Alan Brangman, Wendy Clark, and Samina Quraeshi. Thanks, too, to Tony Tighe, the current *Your Town* Endowment project director.

At the National Trust for Historic Preservation Susan Kidd and Marilyn Fedelchak Harley initiated the original *Your Town* proposals. Peter Brink, vice president for Programs, Services and Information, has been a supporter of the workshops. At the State University of New York at Syracuse Scott Shannon has been involved in the *Your Town* program from its inception. He designed the *Your Town* logo, newsletter and notebook, and developed the mapping and graphics elements of the workshop.

Many thanks to the coordinators and faculty of our cooperating regional institutions: the Department of Planning, Arizona State University; the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia; the Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning, Kansas State University; the Faculty of Landscape Architecture, State University of New York, Syracuse; and the Historic Preservation League of Oregon and School of Architecture and Allied Arts, University of Oregon. These institutions have helped spread the workshops around the country while preserving the original quality and integrity of the program. Thanks, too, to the special keynote speakers, guest lecturers, and small-group facilitators who contributed their time and expertise. Most of all, our thanks go to the workshop participants—unfailingly enthusiastic and creative—who really make *Your Town: Designing Its Future* work.

Richard Hawks
Chair, Faculty of Landscape Architecture
State University of New York, Syracuse

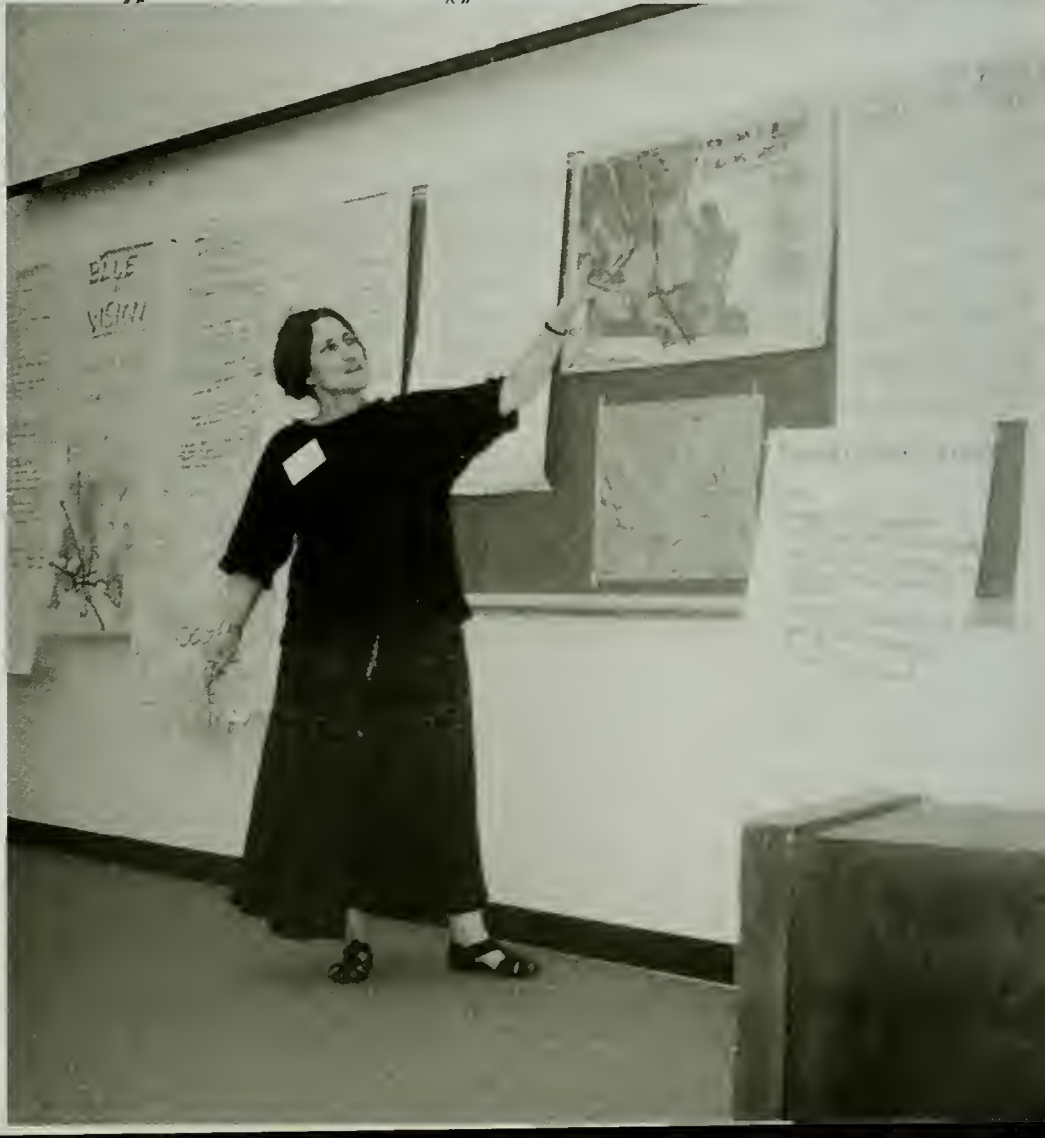
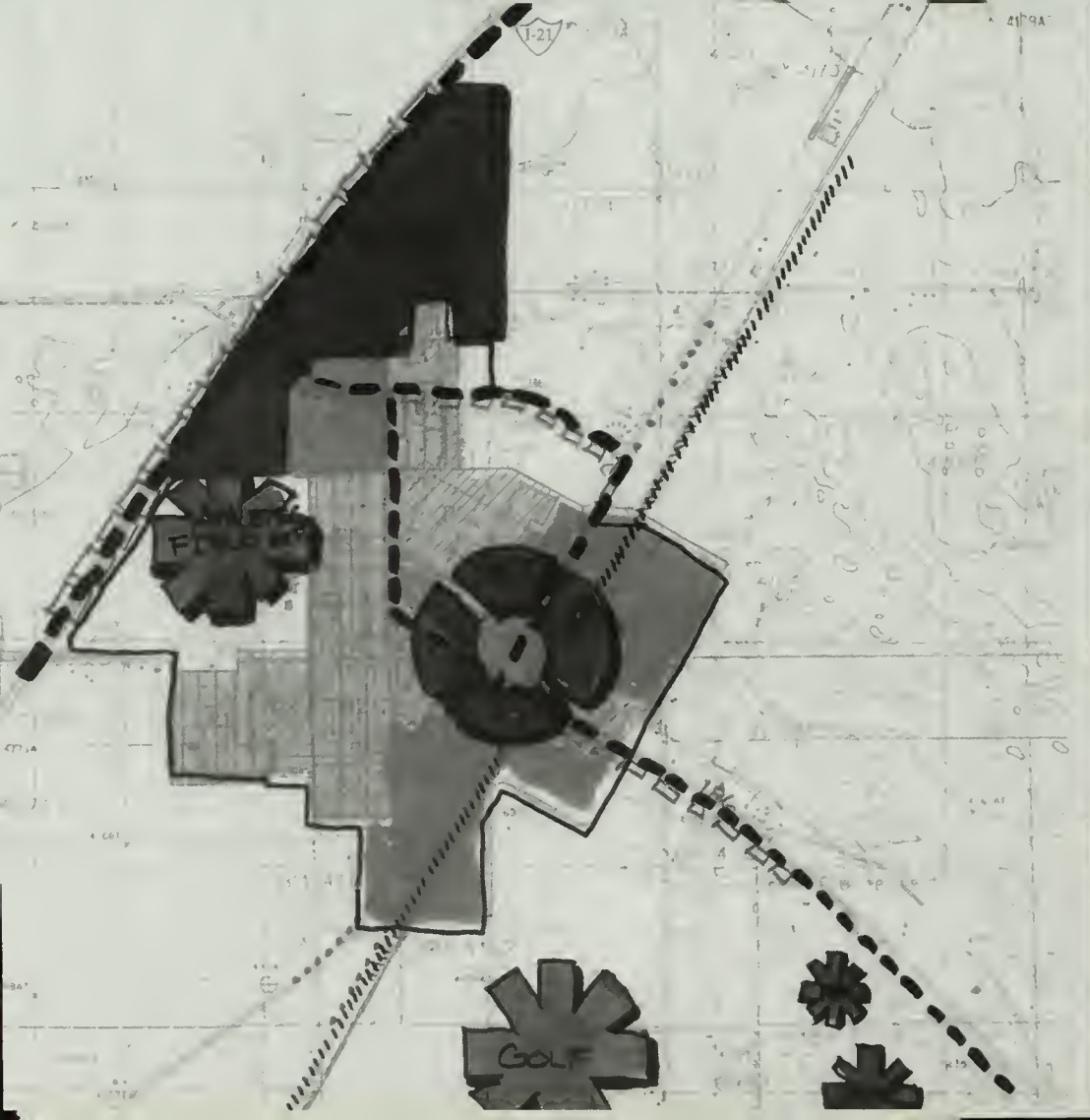
Shelley S. Mastran
Director, Rural Heritage Program
National Trust for Historic Preservation

PREFACE

America's rural communities are at risk from large-scale changes in the national economy, population movements, the impact of telecommunications and mass merchandising, and changes in land-use policy. Some rural towns—particularly those in the northern Great Plains, the Mississippi Delta, and central Appalachia—are experiencing a loss of population and jobs; others—especially ones near metropolitan areas and in parts of the West and South—are coping with rapid growth from suburban sprawl, tourism, or an influx of a retirement population.

In the face of these forces rural communities struggle to maintain their sense of identity and quality of life. They initiate economic-development strategies, plan heritage-tourism programs, or enact new zoning ordinances in an effort to control the forces of change. Yet all too often these endeavors are undertaken without a comprehensive vision of community design. The forces affecting change in the rural landscape do not inevitably signal the loss of the qualities that define community character and make rural areas attractive places to live and work. Design solutions can make the difference between community survival or decay and prosperity or decline. Yet rural areas in general do not have ready access to sources of design assistance or information about design applications to their problems. Furthermore, the assistance that is available is usually very focused—on commercial revitalization, environmental quality, or affordable housing, for example—and does not deal comprehensively with the range of design issues facing rural communities.

The *Your Town: Designing Its Future* workshops were developed to address these issues. They focus on the process of design as an important aspect of community spirit and community integrity. The workshops aim specifically to introduce rural technical-assistance providers and rural decision makers to the role of design in community planning. "Community" is conceived of here in a broad sense—to include the built environment, the surrounding landscape that supports the community economically and gives it a sense of place, and the people who live there. *Your Town* encourages rural residents to think comprehensively about their communities and to design their futures based on that comprehensive vision. The workshops stress the importance of design in defining quality of life and the notion that design is not a luxury or an afterthought, but an integral part of community well-being. Indeed, *Your Town* teaches that design is not just an effect of community vitality but a cause as well: Design itself is a tool for effecting change.



INTRODUCTION TO YOUR TOWN

BACKGROUND

The Rural Heritage Program of the National Trust has been interested in community design issues since the program's inception in 1979. In the early 1980s National Trust staff worked on rural demonstration projects in Oley, Pennsylvania, and Cazenovia, New York, helping local residents to evaluate their natural and cultural resources, articulate a vision for their community, and prioritize goals and objectives for designing the community's future. In Cazenovia the National Trust worked with the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York in Syracuse to deliver a "short course" on rural conservation containing many of the elements that appear in the *Your Town* curriculum.

The origins of *Your Town* lie in plans prepared by the National Trust in the late 1980s to develop a pilot training program to assist regional and community leaders in developing growth-management strategies to protect America's historic countryside. In August 1990 the National Endowment for the Arts issued a request for proposals to structure an initiative to respond to the design needs of small towns and rural communities, including both growth-management issues and economic revitalization. The Endowment selected the National Trust's proposal, and *Your Town* was born.

Specifically, this initiative was to provide a forum for rural technical-assistance providers to share their professional skills and learn new design techniques that would aid them in their work with rural communities. The idea was to "train the trainers" as a way to spread design assistance efficiently and effectively. A suggested format was a series of participatory workshops that would start to build a network of technical-assistance providers around the country. The proposal submitted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in cooperation with the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Syracuse resulted in a cooperative agreement with the Endowment signed in December 1990.

The National Trust and SUNY developed a model education program for rural design as a series of regional workshops. The participants were to be recruited from federal, state, and regional governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit corporations that provide technical assistance to rural communities, as well as local business leaders, elected officials, and community volunteers. The workshops consisted of lectures, discussions, case studies, exercises, problem solving, and network development.



THE WORKSHOPS ARE INTENSE YET FUN IN TWO DAYS TEAM MEMBERS DEVELOP AND PRESENT THEIR VISION OF YOUR TOWN'S FUTURE

THE GOALS OF THE YOUR TOWN WORKSHOPS WERE:

- ▶ To raise consciousness of the role of design in rural communities
- ▶ To equip participants with the tools and techniques to identify, protect, and enhance their towns and landscapes
- ▶ To improve the working methods and relationships of those who are already providing assistance to rural areas on design and community-development issues
- ▶ To learn the fundamentals of the design process
- ▶ To apply the design process to rural community problems and enhance the ability to develop effective solutions; and
- ▶ To provide a forum for rural technical-assistance providers to share their professional skills and exchange ideas and experiences with rural communities.

COMMUNITIES ARE TRYING TO
AVOID THE UNDIFFERENTIATED
SUBURBAN SPRAWL THAT
HAS ENGULFED MUCH OF
THE COUNTRY



WORKSHOP HISTORY

From 1991 to 1993 the National Trust and SUNY produced three regional Your Town workshops (Bozeman, Montana; Nashville, Tennessee; and Prescott, Arizona). Brochures announcing the first workshop were distributed widely. Participants applied and were chosen through a competitive process. Nearly seventy-five people attended the Montana workshop at the historic Gallatin Gateway Inn in Bozeman; participants paid tuition, room, board, and transportation to attend.

Procedures for subsequent workshops changed—largely in an effort to reach out to residents of rural communities who were unable to afford the costs of a three-day workshop. Potential participants were identified in advance through the assistance of the state historic preservation offices, statewide preservation organizations, statewide Main Street programs, and other organizations. In addition participants were sought from the U.S. Forest Service, the Resources Conservation and Development agency (RC&D) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Extension Service, and other agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Potential participants were then invited to submit applications, from which approximately thirty were selected. The room, board, and tuition of each participant were fully subsidized; participants simply had to fund their own transportation to the workshop site.

Before the first *Your Town* in Montana it was decided that the workshops must take place in special rural settings—places that both conveyed a strong message about good design and provided the atmosphere of a retreat where participants would not be distracted from the learning experience. Finding such places has often been a challenge, but most *Your Town* workshops have taken

place in particularly memorable rural settings. Among such special places are the Hachland Hill Vineyard between Nashville and Clarksville, Tennessee—a log-cabin retreat; Silver Falls State Park at the foot of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon; Wells College on the shore of Cayuga Lake in New York; Unicoi State Park in the mountains of north Georgia; and the Hassayampa Inn, a rehabilitated historic hotel in downtown Prescott, Arizona.

Each *Your Town* workshop is highly labor-intensive and is specially structured to meet the needs of a regional audience. After the first round of three workshops it was determined that, for the sake of efficiency, the workshop delivery system should be expanded to accommodate a broader range of participants in a given year and to enhance the provision of follow-up technical assistance to rural communities. Selected institutions with design expertise were asked to submit proposals to produce *Your Town* workshops. Five were ultimately selected:

- ▶ the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York at Syracuse
- ▶ the School of Environmental Design at the University of Georgia
- ▶ the Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University
- ▶ the Department of Planning at Arizona State University; and
- ▶ the Historic Preservation League of Oregon with the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon

Shelley Mastran, director of the Rural Heritage Program of the National Trust, and Richard Hawks, chair of the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at SUNY, continued to monitor and orchestrate the

workshops and provide core curriculum and historical experience as the National Your Town Center, while the five regional centers actually produced the workshops. In this way, multiple workshops were produced in the same period of time.

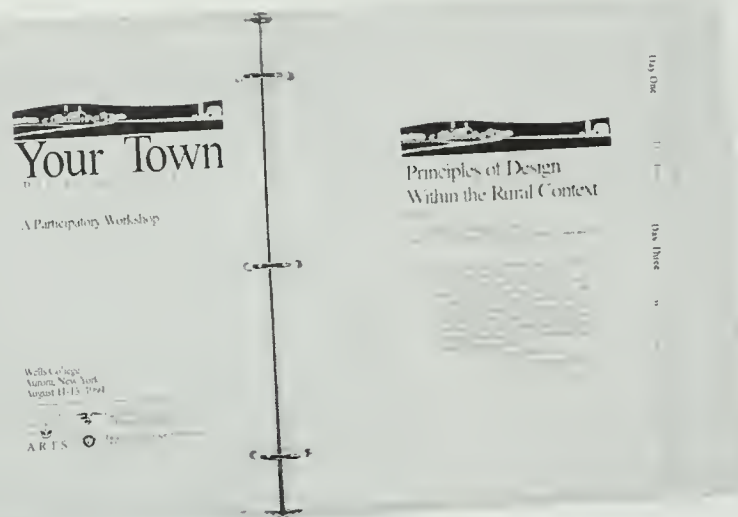
WORKSHOP FORMAT AND DESIGN

A *Your Town* workshop takes place over a period of two and a half days with an intense schedule that allows little time for diversions and distractions. The curriculum focuses on the process by which rural communities construct a vision about their future, evaluate their natural and cultural assets, and implement decisions about how their community should look and function. The aim is not to promote specific answers to specific questions but, rather, a *framework* for problem solving. Materials are presented in a highly visual format, principally through slides and maps. Workshop course material covers the following topics:

- ▶ Design Changes in Rural America: The Forces at Work – an overview of the major forces that are affecting the rural landscape of America
- ▶ The Design Process – the process by which design decisions are made and implemented; the key design concepts behind good community planning
- ▶ Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory and Analysis – an appreciation of the broad range of natural and cultural resources that define community character; how to inventory and evaluate a community's natural and cultural resources
- ▶ Getting and Managing Design Assistance – resources for design assistance; the process of assessing design needs and soliciting and managing assistance



THE WORKSHOPS ARE SERIOUS BUT
THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR
SOME PLAYFUL CREATIVITY



WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE
EXTENSIVE NOTEBOOKS THAT
BECOME VALUABLE REFERENCES
WHEN THEY RETURN HOME.
AT RIGHT: THE WORKSHOP
SCHEDULE IS A "JAM-PACKED"
THREE DAY EXPERIENCE.

- Case-Study Panels — success stories in using the design process to solve local problems or address special resources; a discussion of economic-development, planning, and design issues
- Graphics and Communication — a hands-on workshop in graphics techniques and mapping

- *Your Town* Problem-Solving — a small-group exercise in applying the design process to real-world problems framed for a hypothetical town; using a series of maps and other information about the town, the groups work toward solutions, which they map, illustrate, and present to the other groups for discussion

All workshop participants receive a notebook that provides abstracts and illustrations from each of the lectures and presentations. Specially tailored to each individual workshop, the notebook is designed to provide a ready reference throughout the workshop.

The most critical component of the *Your Town* workshop is the problem-solving exercise that simulates the design process itself. A hypothetical "Your Town," modeled on a real town of the region, is devised with maps, a data base, and slides. Problems that pertain to typical rural communities are posed—for example, a proposed bypass around the town; a proposed subdivision on the perimeter of the community; abandoned historic buildings; insufficient greenways, parks, and open space; and deteriorating downtowns. The problem-solving exercise provides a forum for sharing ideas and creative thinking about ways to

solve common problems that many of the participants already face at home. Yet, because the exercise is hypothetical, it releases participants from the pressure of everyday politics and naysaying and stimulates their creative thinking. Workshop participants generally become very involved in the problem-solving exercise, sometimes staying up late into the last night to work on solutions. Participants are encouraged to develop *graphic* solutions for all of the problems posed—with the understanding that words alone are of limited value in communicating design ideas. A typical workshop schedule is illustrated below.

Workshop Schedule - Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania				
				October 29-November 1
Time	Sunday - 10.29	Monday - 10.30	Tuesday - 10.31	Wednesday - 11.01
7:00 am		Breakfast	Breakfast	
8:00 am		Graphics, Mapping & Communicating Design - 45 min - Laurel McSherry	Managing & Getting Design Assistance - 45 min - Linda Harper	Breakfast
9:00 am		Graphic Communication Workshop - 75 min - Staff w/ Small Groups	Case Study Panel - 90 min - Moderator - Jeff Soule	
10:00 am		Break	Panelists - Linda Harper, Dan Marriott, David Taylor	
11:00 am		Natural & Cultural Resources: Lecture - 45 min - S. Shannon & B. Szczygiel	Your Town Workshop - Staff w/ Small Groups	Checkout & Departure
12:00 pm	Registration - 60 min.	Natural & Cultural Resources: Reading the Pennsylvania Landscape - Field Trip - 120 min - Gerry Depo, Bill Brobst, Scott Shannon, Bonj Szczygiel	Working Lunch	
1:00 pm	Introduction & Opening Comments - 30 min	Intro to Your Town - 30 min - Scott Shannon	Your Town Workshop (cont'd) - 5.25 hrs total - Staff w/ Small Groups	
2:00 pm	Changes in Rural America: The Forces at Work - 45 min - Emanuel Carter			
3:00 pm	Break	Your Town Workshop - 3.5 hrs - Staff w/ Small Groups	Project Set-up - 30 min.	
4:00 pm	The Design Process - 1 hr - Cheryl Doble		Comment & Review of Team Projects - 90 min - Your Town Faculty	
5:00 pm	Small Group Mtg. & Intros - 90 min - Staff w/ Small Groups			
6:00 pm	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	
7:00 pm	Dinner -	Informal Dinner	Dinner - Course Evaluations & Closing Remarks - Jeff Soule - CRP, Shelley Mastran - NTHP, Scott Shannon - YTNE	
Evening	Welcome - Town of Bloomsburg, Bloomsburg University, Keynote Address - Thomas Hylton	Your Town Workshop - 2 hrs - Staff w/ Small Groups	- Shmoozing	

WORKSHOP SUCCESS

From the very first workshop in Montana *Your Town* hit a positive chord among most of the participants, providing something that was simply not available elsewhere. For many the *Your Town* experience has been exciting and inspirational—offering contacts with new people, creative ideas, examples of real community successes, and models of a design process that could be successfully applied to their own community issues.

Follow-up evaluations of Your Town workshops have taken place over the years in an effort to determine the long-term impact that the program may have had. From these evaluations we have learned that, at least for many participants, the Your Town experience was influential and continues to guide their work. Lexie McDaniel of Scottsville, Kentucky, for example, used the tenets of Your Town in forming a planning and zoning commission and in developing a renovation plan for Scottsville's downtown. Lexie's professional growth was enhanced as a result of the workshop: "I have been able to share what I learned at Your Town—to see the big picture, not just one project at a time." Curtis Arrington, who considered himself an untrained amateur in the realm of planning, became the chair of a committee responsible for writing the first general plan for Payson City, Utah. Curtis thanks Your Town for teaching him how to establish goals and how to follow a process to achieve them.

The Your Town program has been acknowledged for its achievements in the field of planning and design. In 1996 Your Town received a Professional Honors Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects and in 1997 the Public Education Award from the American Planning Association.

As a way to document the long-term successes of the Your Town program the National Your Town Center sought to identify communities where former workshop participants had been able to bring about significant changes since attending Your Town. Several surveys of former participants revealed that many of them continue to regard the workshop experience as influential in their lives and are working to carry out the principles they learned. Several dozen participants reported that *Your Town* affected their work "completely." From these participants four case studies were chosen that exemplify the goals of the workshops: to make design an important tool in the enhancement of the quality of life in rural communities.

The case studies are:
Anaconda, Montana
Queen Creek, Arizona
Montezuma, Georgia
Morrisville, New York



RICHARD MOSE, PRESIDENT OF
THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AND
JANET HARRIS, CHAIR OF
THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
OF THE ARTS, PRESENTING THE
AWARD FROM THE AMERICAN
PLANNING ASSOCIATION.



CASE STUDY: ANACONDA, MONTANA



BACKGROUND

Anaconda, Montana, is a town of approximately 7,000 people in the mountainous southwestern region of the state. More than a mile high, Anaconda serves as the gateway to the rugged Pintler Mountains, which tower as a snow-capped backdrop to the west of the town. Anaconda is better known as the historic site of one of the largest copper-smelting operations in the world—sister city to nearby Butte, where the copper was mined. Beginning in the 1880s Butte and Anaconda produced one sixth of the world's copper. Today, as a result of that history, Anaconda is one of the largest Superfund sites in the country. Driving into eastern Anaconda, visitors pass a vast black slag heap under the 585-foot-tall smelter stack as well as hillsides scarred by the smelting operations where extensive reclamation is now under way.

In fall 1991 three residents of Anaconda attended the first *Your Town* workshop in Bozeman, Montana: Barbara Andreozzi, county extension agent; James “Milo” Manning, director of planning for Deer Lodge County; and Jim Davison, executive director of the Anaconda Local Development Corporation. Milo and Jim were long-term residents, and all three were community leaders in a position to affect the future of Anaconda; all saw in *Your Town* an opportunity to improve the ongoing community-planning process that would accelerate as a result of the clean-up of the Superfund site undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

THE COMMUNITY

In 1991 Anaconda was still staggering from the blow dealt in September 1980 when the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) closed the large smelter of its subsidiary, the Anaconda Company. When the smelter closed not only were some 1,100 jobs lost, but the town lost approximately sixty percent of its tax base. The population of Deer Lodge County, of which Anaconda is the largest settlement, dropped from 12,500 in 1980 to slightly over 10,000 in 1992. For ten years after the smelter closed no new housing construction occurred. The problems were psychological as well as economic; the spirit of the town was deflated. And, although the smelter landscape was historic and gave the community a strong identity, it was nevertheless a Superfund site with substantial environmental damage to be repaired.

Even before the closing of the smelter Anaconda had been engaged in a master-planning process, aimed at revitalizing the worn-down and declining downtown. During the 1970s ‘urban renewal’ efforts had been undertaken in parts of Anaconda. One whole block of historic, but run-down, buildings had been razed so that a pedestrian mall could be constructed. Fortunately, historic preservationists organized to prevent any further demolition and were able to save the city hall and other structures. The mall was never built. Some grand historic buildings still grace the downtown: the 1898 gray stone courthouse, the 1896 Hearst Library (William Randolph Hearst had been an early investor in the Anaconda Company), the post office, a theatre, and the operational roundhouse.

THE YOUR TOWN EXPERIENCE

The timing of the *Your Town* workshop was fortu-

itous for Anaconda, because just as Barb, Jim, and Milo returned to the community filled with inspiration and ideas, ARCO—with Superfund appropriations from the EPA—began to invest in the reclamation of the area. Money was available to conduct a regional historic preservation plan and to enlarge the community master-planning process—with the *Your Town* graduates to help lead the way.

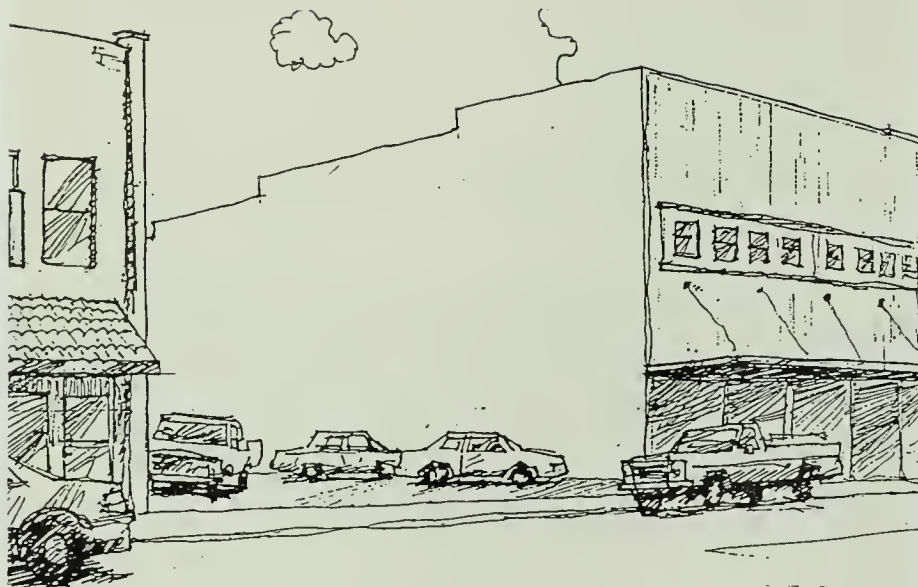
Barb, Jim, and Milo share an enthusiasm for the lessons of the *Your Town* experience. All three gained an appreciation for a holistic community-design process—instead of the fragmented planning that had been the norm in Anaconda. Barb cites a new awareness of the importance of the visual in planning and design that she learned from the small-group problem-solving exercise. From *Your Town* she learned that everything must be shown graphically, not through words alone. Also, planning must involve the community at large; community design must reflect the will of all the stakeholders. Over the next several years all these principles were applied to the master-planning process and a visioning process that Barb, as county extension agent, facilitated.

CHANGES SINCE YOUR TOWN

In 1994 the county executive and Barb applied for a \$12,000 “Getting Things Done” grant from the Governor’s Office of Community Service and received \$6,500 in rural development funds from Montana State University to undertake community visioning—a process developed by Montana State University Extension that involves a series of community meetings bringing together citizens with a wide range of interests to articulate a vision, define goals and objectives, and prioritize implementation actions.

“The workshop really opened my eyes to the concept of designing and planning for our town.”

Lawrence, Kansas, 1996



ILLUSTRATING HOW INFILL BUILDINGS CAN REINFORCE THE DESIGN CHARACTER OF ANACONDA'S MAIN STREET.



Anaconda wanted to build on its special heritage—its mining history and landscape as well as its magnificent historic structures—and to make the community more livable, economically viable, and accessible. Out of the visioning process six goals were developed:

- ▶ Enhance the visual character of Anaconda's entry corridors and the central business district
- ▶ Develop housing for low- and middle-income individuals and families within the existing city
- ▶ Preserve the historic character of Anaconda
- ▶ Increase the density of retail and commercial activity in the central business district
- ▶ Link Anaconda to the numerous recreational opportunities available in the area; and
- ▶ Develop new facilities for public service.

The whole visioning process was informed by the *Your Town* experience of Barb, Jim, and Milo.

Barb, in particular, felt that all the community's goals must be illustrated in the planning document that was to be produced. "The need in all our planning was a clear visual 'look' at what the community's words and ideas would be. The conference really taught me I had to have models and drawings." She contacted Ralph Johnson with the MSU School of Architecture, who had been a faculty member at the workshop. Johnson recruited a graduate student, Rick Kincaid, to work with Anaconda on presenting the community's plans graphically. Thus, Anaconda's Vision document, which Rick prepared, illustrated every aspect of every goal—so that the reader could see what the streets would look like with new trees, what new affordable housing would look like on vacant lots, and what new entrance signs would do for the appearance of the community's gateways.

One of the objectives that emerged from the visioning process was to revitalize the Kennedy Common, a historic community park near down-

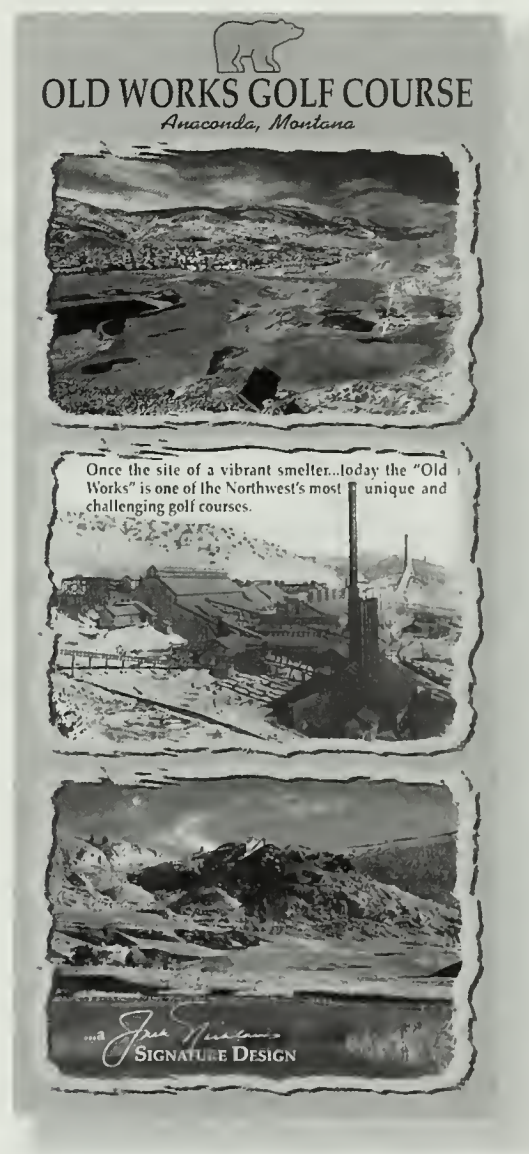
town. Used for ice skating in winter and baseball in summer, the park had been allowed to deteriorate, suffering a loss of vegetation, lighting, and pathways. A landscape architect was hired to produce a redesign of the Common that spoke to modern needs while reflecting plans that had been developed in the first decades of the century. The design was displayed for the community to review and a three-dimensional model of the new park was made by a MSU student and displayed along with the drawings. “If they see it, then they’ll understand it,” Barb explains. “We knew they had to see it.” Exhibited in the lobby of a downtown bank, the model and drawings drew the attention and stimulated discussion by residents, who were encouraged to submit comments and support the rehabilitation of the park.

CONCLUSION

Today Anaconda is a growing community, attracting new businesses, residents, and visitors. Its downtown is putting on a new face as the vision plan is implemented. Twelve Canadian cherry trees were planted along downtown streets in 1996, and six more in early summer 1997. A new brick welcome sign was erected at the east end of town, and a landscaping plan is under way. A Jack Nicholas “signature” golf course has been constructed on one of the smelter sites (part of the Superfund reclamation project), incorporating historic mining relics along an interpretive trail. Plans are under way for a pedestrian-and-bike-trail system through Anaconda.

These changes have not occurred *because* of *Your Town*, but the workshop did provide a fortuitous inspiration to three leaders to help jumpstart the process of community rediscovery and revitalization. Barb maintains that Milo and Jim

learned a new language at *Your Town*. “You grew tremendously out of the *Your Town* workshop,” she tells Milo—who admits to having had “a reputation for not being historic-minded.” Before the workshop she sometimes had difficulty communicating with her cohorts; afterwards they spoke the same language. That language is giving some people in the community new hope. Today an optimistic spirit is in the air of Anaconda. “The people here *really* care about their community,” says Barb, and this care is finding its way onto the landscape.



GOLF COURSE DESIGN INCORPORATES
DISTINCTIVE LOCAL HISTORY

CASE STUDY: QUEEN CREEK, ARIZONA



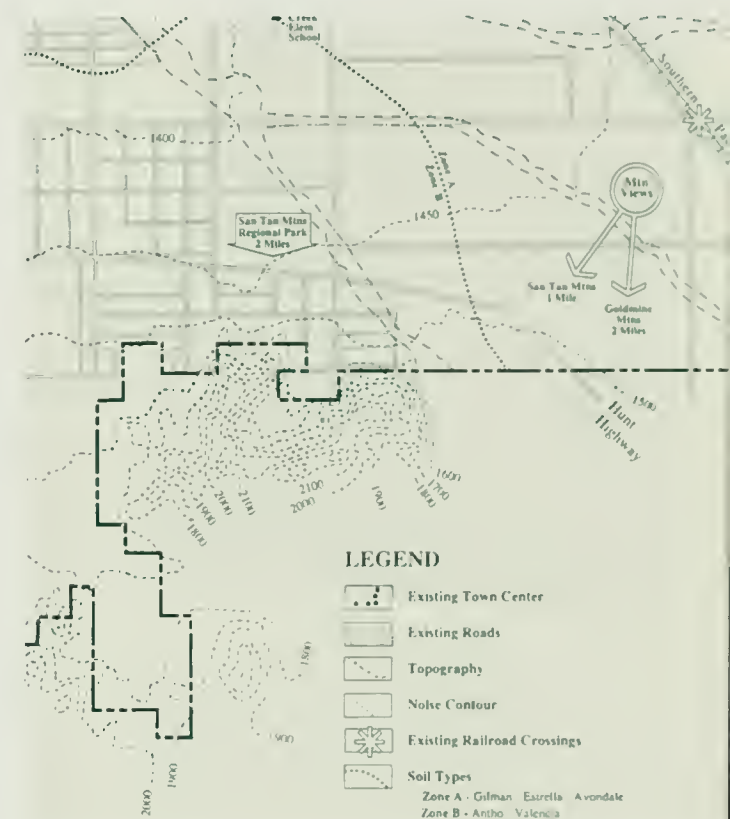
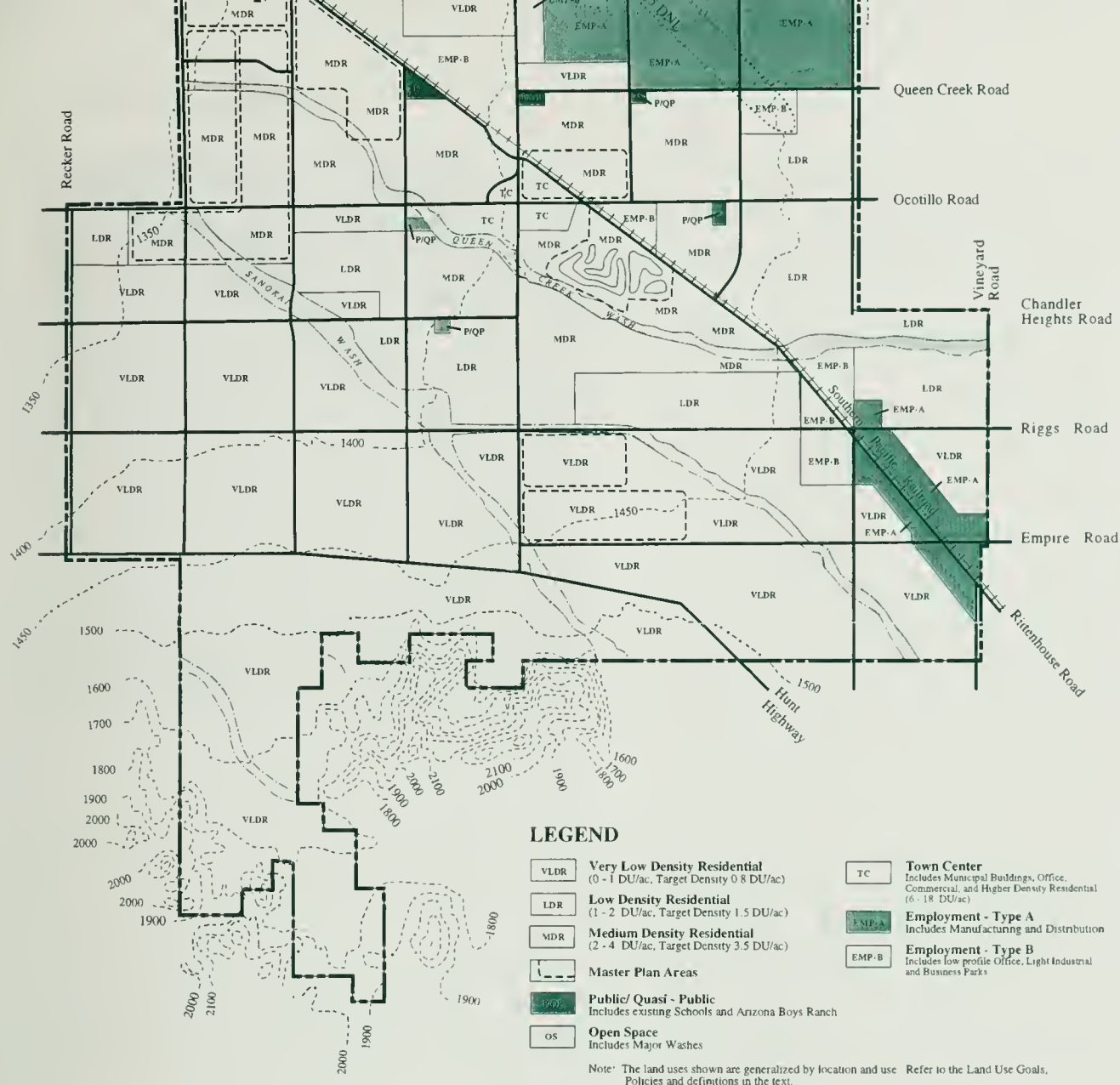
BACKGROUND

Queen Creek, Arizona, is located in the southeast corner of Maricopa County, approximately a forty-five-minute drive from Phoenix. The fertile valley below the San Tan Mountains offered a safe haven for prehistoric Native American communities and early homesteaders who farmed and ranched along the Queen Creek Wash. Citrus, cotton, pecans, vegetables, and other crops still provide for area families, and the Wash is a key feature in the town's plan for future recreation trails and open space.

By the time Arizona became a state in 1912 a true community had been formed in Queen Creek. Residents established traditions of neighborliness and rural fun. Some remember street dances, dips in local swimming holes, and sleeping under the stars in the summer. The general store, church, and post office served as community gathering places—and still do so today. Many of the town's founding families still choose Queen Creek as their home, and many of the local roads carry their names.

Longtime residents also remember the railroad switch at Rittenhouse and Ellsworth roads where they could flag down the train—called a dinky—which consisted of an engine and coach. After paying their fare, they could hop aboard for a ride into Mesa, Tempe, Phoenix, or Tucson. In the 1920s Queen Creek experienced an influx of immigrants who had moved from Mexico to work





AT LEFT TOWN OF QUEEN CREEK
GENERAL PLAN ABOVE CITIZENS
NEED A SHARED UNDERSTANDING
OF THE UNDERLYING COMMUNITY
STRUCTURE

as miners in southern Arizona. They picked the local cotton crop by hand until the cotton gin arrived in the early twenties. In the 1940s Germans from the prisoner of war camp in Queen Creek and Philippine immigrants joined farm laborers in local fields. Today Queen Creek is preparing for new additions to its rich cultural diversity.

Located in a broad, open valley of the Sonoran Desert with towering saguaro cactus covering the San Tan Mountains at the southern edge of the town, Queen Creek remains essentially unchanged. Yet the community is directly in the path of Phoenix's rapid expansion, which has engulfed nearby towns during the last two

decades. The adjacent community of Gilbert, for example, is approving 300 building permits per month; its population has doubled in six years; and it has the fastest growing school district in Arizona.

THE COMMUNITY

Queen Creek has approximately 3,500 citizens, all of whom appear to be realistic about its inevitable growth. But rather than simply resign themselves to undifferentiated sprawl they have decided to focus on the issue of the quality of development. The town incorporated in 1989 to preserve the benefits of rural life while providing a process for



NEWSPAPER ARTICLE CELEBRATING THE CHILDRENS' VIEW OF QUEEN CREEK.

managed growth. Residents seek to preserve the town's friendly small-town spirit while working for economic and recreational opportunities and a high quality of life.

In many ways Queen Creek is fortunate in that it only recently incorporated. This gave residents a clean slate from which to create a vision for the community as well as the opportunity to take advantage of contemporary community-design theories and techniques like those of the *Your Town* workshops. Fortunately Queen Creek has had a consistent core of dedicated citizens and professionals since its incorporation. This group has provided the continuity so important for consistent, sustainable community design.

THE YOUR TOWN EXPERIENCE

Three of this core group attended the 1995 *Your Town* workshop in nearby Casa Grande, Arizona. They were Vice Mayor June Calendar, Town Manager Cynthia Seelhammer, and Russell Carlson, local business owner and planning commissioner. For all three the timing of the workshop was perfect because they were just embarking on the first update of their general plan. The town had been contracting for part-time planning staff, but it needed a professional staff person. The decision was made to share with the neighboring town of Gilbert the expenses of a half-time planner, John Kross, but within a few months it became obvious that Queen Creek needed a full-time planner and John was hired.

Although the first general plan was a good document, the *Your Town* workshop opened the three participants' eyes to new ways of thinking about their community, and they have helped the town actively develop other tools besides the general plan to manage its growth, including a town-

center plan, an open-space-and-trails plan, zoning ordinances, and a subdivision code. This is no small feat in a typical Arizona community that, according to Cynthia, tends to believe "no government is good government." To which John Kross adds, "with a dose of John Wayne thrown in."

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Since the *Your Town* workshop, numerous initiatives have worked to affect community spirit and sense of place. Like other growth areas of the Southwest, Queen Creek experiences what is known as the "churn phenomenon": For every five new residents who move in, three or four move out. Yet, despite residential turnover the citizens of Queen Creek seem to have a clear collective vision of the community's future. As was emphasized in the *Your Town* workshop, everyone seems to have a mental image of the town's fundamental structure, including a dense commercial center, concentrated residential development to the northwest, and open space and a trail system along the washes.

One way Queen Creek has worked to preserve the collective image of the town is by developing a packet for new residents. Each new family is individually greeted by a member of the town council and given a welcoming packet that focuses on the community's past, present and future. In addition to greetings and directories there are such short pieces as "Queen Creek History, Heritage Reflects Ties to the Land" and "Linking Old and New, A Vision for the Future" as well as a map of the general plan. The packet encourages new residents to get involved and conveys the idea that becoming part of this community is more than owning a home or some land; it also involves a commitment. As Cynthia says, the packet tries to



get over the “us versus them” of old timers versus new residents early on.

The mayor is committed to continuous communication and participation with residents, even though he admits that at times the process can be slow and inefficient. To disseminate important information to the community a newsletter is published four times a year. The purpose is to keep the community informed of issues, solicit public opinion, and encourage people to get involved in community affairs. Each newsletter has a section called “New Zoning Issues: What’s New in Queen Creek?” which discusses in some detail the proposed projects in the community. In addition there are articles on issues facing the community. One example, written by the mayor, was a recognition of the long-time residents of the community and the important role they played in shaping the town. To further this recognition the town is helping to organize oral histories and has held a dinner recognizing the pioneers of the past and calling on the community to “*become the pioneers of today.*”

The town also ran a competition to design a logo expressing the vision of the community. The competition forms were widely publicized, and more than sixty entries were received. The winning logo is simple. It shows the essential characteristics of the town with its valley, washes, and surrounding mountains and now appears on the town’s business cards, lapel pins, and newsletter heading, contributing to the overall sense of community.

Faced with increasing growth and change, the community decided to record what it is today before important features disappear. Instead of hiring a professional photographer to take photographs Queen Creek turned to its own children. With a grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts the town hired a professional photographer to teach junior high students the fundamentals of photography and provided each of them with an inexpensive camera and film. The black-and-white pictures were taken by the youths over the course of a year so that all the seasons are represented. The students snapped whatever caught their eye, including cowboys, an old truck, the local pet cemetery, and a messy front porch. The exercise culminated in a public exhibit and awards. The outcome may be best expressed in the words of the professional photographer, who at first glance had wondered what there was to photograph in the community: “It was quite exciting. I found an incredible bunch of people—environmentalists, cowboys, ranchers, religious people, Mexicans, and farmers who have been there a long time. I found Queen Creek to be a really fascinating place.”

How well have all these community-building efforts paid off? As Cynthia says, “you can tell when a place is making it as a team when you can

AT LEFT RUSSELL CARLSON AND JOHN KROSS RUSS BRINGS LOCAL CHARACTER TO THE TRUE VALUE HARDWARE STORE HE MANAGES BY SELLING MINIATURE TOY HORSES BELOW NEWSLETTER AND LOGOS ARE IMPORTANT WAYS TO COMMUNICATE A TOWN'S VISION AND BUILD COMMUNITY CONSENSUS





CYNTHIA SEELHAMMER WITH
ONE OF QUEEN CREEK'S
IMPORTANT CONSTITUENTS –
HER HORSE.

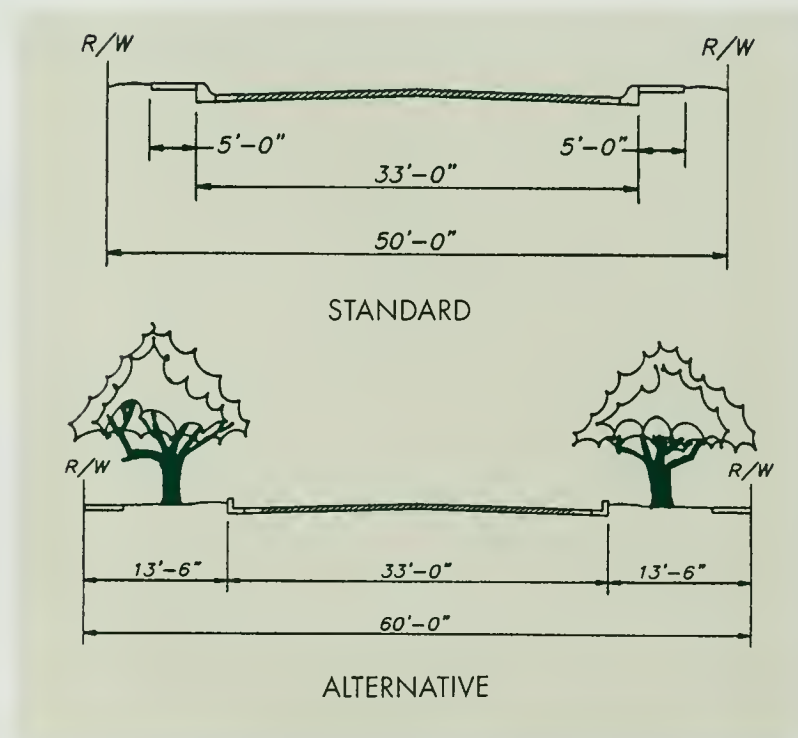
stop anyone in the street and ask them what is going on and get some answer about the progress and vision of the future.” Queen Creek is just such a community. Planner John Kross, who has worked with many communities, says that he has never seen as much participation and broad-based knowledge of the general plan in any other community.

IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

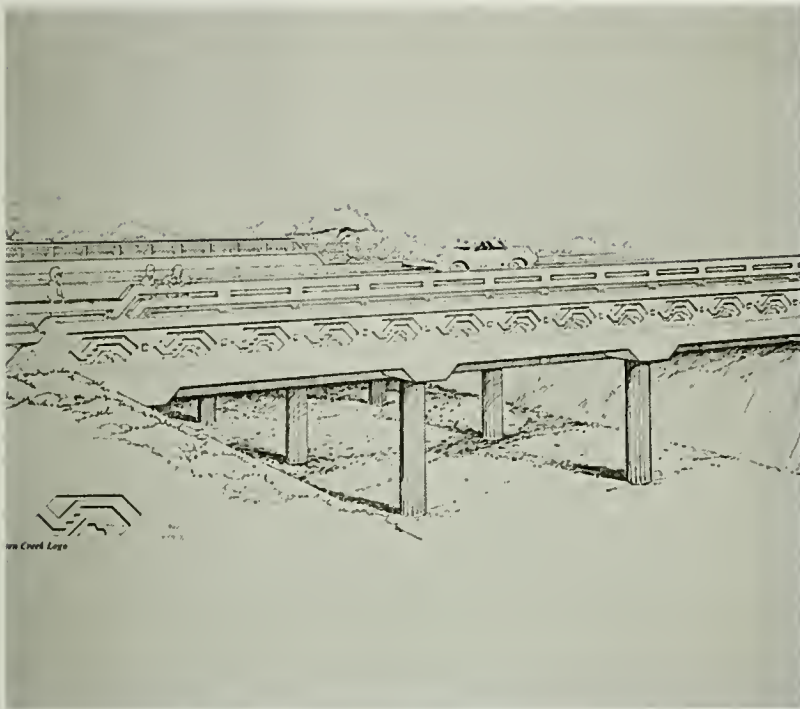
The *Your Town* workshop, particularly the session on open-space subdivisions by Randall Arendt, resulted in a fundamental paradigm shift in the perspectives of the Queen Creek participants that has lasted until today. Workshop alumni began to ask fundamental questions about business-as-usual, standard engineering design solutions to

problems. For example, the Maricopa County Department of Transportation (McDOT) planned to replace two Queen Creek bridges. The engineers proposed one of a handful of standard Jersey Barrier design solutions. Town officials saw these structures as more than just bridges: They are gateways to the community. They asked if there wasn't something that McDOT could do that reflected Queen Creek? The answer was that the bridges could be painted, “but only gray or tan—or you can get the chain link in green vinyl.” Luckily, the town decided that none of these suggestions was good enough and stood its ground. They persuaded McDOT to come up with a new design, and today the bridges clearly reflect their regional context. In addition, the undersides of the bridges are designed so that horseback riders along the trail that follows the wash will have an aesthetically pleasing experience and can ride underneath without dismounting. Even McDOT received some accolades for its sensitivity. Thus, a simple bridge has become symbolic of a community that realizes the importance of design. As another example, the standard McDOT design for a sidewalk, based on criteria of cost and safety, is a combined sidewalk and curb with street trees, if any, planted on the sidewalk edge.

Queen Creek now has a new vision of how the community wants its streets designed. The new design would position the trees between the sidewalk and the curb, thus separating pedestrians from automobiles and allowing the trees to provide shade and a sense of enclosure to the street. The town has decided that tree-lined streets are an important building block in making a good community. Residents believe this simple change in design will have profound implications in the overall appearance of the community.



STANDARD STREET DESIGN LEFT OUT MANY OF THE ELEMENTS THAT ONCE MADE STREETS GREAT PLACES FOR PEOPLE. NEW ALTERNATIVES SEPARATE PEDESTRIANS AND VEHICLES, AND LEAVE ROOM FOR STREET TREES.



CONCLUSION

Queen Creek is a community that has taken stock in itself. It has realized the value of building its civic capacity through a well-informed and participatory citizenry. The town also sees that good, thoughtful design is an important component of the community's rural character and quality of life. Residents have translated the community-shared vision into law—including a subdivision ordinance that requires tree-lined streets and open-style fencing on large lots—and have worked to accomplish tangible design solutions of which all Queen Creek can be proud.



EVEN SOMETHING AS ORDINARY
AS A BRIDGE CAN BE A DESIGN
STATEMENT AND ACT AS A GATE-
WAY TO THE COMMUNITY

"I came home from your conference thoroughly elated. I had to get out of the community and talk with people who were not biased and who did not have predetermined notions of how our community should develop. In a setting free from minutia and crisis, I was able to focus on the 'big picture.' I needed to hear how other communities have handled the problems we face."

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA, 1993

CASE STUDY: MONTEZUMA, GEORGIA



BACKGROUND

In the middle of the night of July 5th, 1994, after days of persistent rain, the farm ponds above Beaver Creek, tributary of the Flint River in west central Georgia, broke—causing Beaver Creek to flow around its levee and, with no warning, to creep along Railroad Street into downtown Montezuma. Soon buildings stood in six feet of filthy water. Less than two days later the Flint River crested—bringing water into downtown to a height of up to thirteen feet. For six days the water did not recede. By the time it did the lives of Montezuma's residents and the fate of the downtown had been changed forever.

Cleaning, rebuilding, and revitalizing downtown Montezuma were arduous tasks, ones that many rural communities would find too daunting. But in Montezuma's case the revitalization was orchestrated by Caren Allgood, participant in a *Your Town* workshop produced by the University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design five months after the flood. Largely because of Caren's influence Montezuma has dramatically changed the look and vitality of its downtown, and its citizens are much more conscious of the importance of community design. Montezuma, after the flood, is truly a new place.

THE COMMUNITY

Montezuma, Georgia, incorporated in 1854, was named by veterans of the Mexican War. From its earliest days it was a thriving market center for agriculture. From Montezuma cotton was shipped by railroad to Savannah, and the Flint River provided an avenue for steamboat transportation as well. After the demise of cotton in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Montezuma continued to prosper as a market center for peaches, pecans, and other agricultural products. Both the commercial and residential sections of the town reflect this early wealth. Numerous historic buildings, most from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, line the streets of the historic district. However, in the late 1960s the downtown underwent a period of “modernization” when many buildings were fitted with metal facades, wood paneling, and other materials to cover the historic bricks and windows.

As with many small Southern towns, during the last decades Montezuma’s population has declined; it is currently about 4,600. The town still functions largely as a market center for the surrounding agricultural region. Macon County’s unemployment is high—10.8 percent—and it ranks among the lowest tenth of counties across the state in terms of median family income and persons below the poverty level. In 1994, before the flood, most downtown businesses in Montezuma were stable but struggling to maintain the status quo.

THE YOUR TOWN EXPERIENCE

At the time of the flood Caren Allgood was in the heating and cooling contracting business, and life was “business as usual.” After the flood, in part

because her business partner had had the foresight to order pressure washers and generators during the flood period, Caren became an active participant in the downtown clean-up. And, because Caren was former president of the Montezuma Historical Society, she was the person contacted when Georgia’s Historic Preservation Division (HPD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced the availability of grants to rehabilitate flooded historic properties. (The grant money was available through the National Park Service for properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.)

Under the guidance of the federal and state agencies as well as the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Montezuma formed a Historic Preservation Revitalization Task Force, with Caren recruited by the city manager, David Peaster, to be its chairman. The ten-person task force set to work soliciting design suggestions, helping businesses get estimates on the cost of interior and roof repairs, issuing a request for proposal for facade restoration, and filling out the requisite grant applications. In November 1994 Caren received a phone call from Lisa Vogel, coordinator of an upcoming *Your Town* workshop in Georgia, inviting her to attend. The Georgia HPD had recommended Caren and offered to pay the full room-and-board cost of adding a participant at the last minute.



CAREN ALLGOOD STANDING NEXT
TO POLE MARKING THE FIRST
WATER MARK OF THE INFAMOUS
1994 FLOOD

For Caren the workshop was a catalytic experience. "It really changed the way I looked at everything," she says. Caren had grown up in Covington, Georgia, east of Atlanta. Once "in the country," Covington was now a sprawling node along the interstate, and although Covington is a Main Street community with a revitalized historic downtown, Caren hated the unsightly development that had changed its boundaries and surroundings. Still she had never considered that what had happened to Covington was not inevitable: "I never thought about alternate ways of growing." *Your Town* changed all that. The small-group problem-solving exercise and, particularly, her interaction with University of Georgia's Pratt Cassity, her small-group leader, sensitized Caren to the appearance of the built environment and convinced her that communities can design their own futures.

REVEALING AND RESTORING OLD
BUILDING FACADES CAN BE AN
EXCITING PROCESS OF A COMMU-
NITY REDISCOVERING ITS PAST.



CHANGES SINCE YOUR TOWN

After the workshop Caren was determined to bring the *Your Town* experience to Montezuma. Working with the Southern Regional Office of the National Trust and the University of Georgia, she was instrumental in securing a special *Your Town: After the Flood* workshop for residents of flooded communities of southwest Georgia. Held in the town of Americus in July 1995, the workshop was funded by flood grant money from the National Park Service and administered by the National Trust. Caren made sure that both the city manager of Montezuma and the president of the Macon County Chamber of Commerce attended. After the workshop Michelle Allen, Chamber president, knew that "the sky was the limit" for Montezuma. Not only was she sensitized to the character of buildings and the planning process itself, she also realized the potential for what the rebuilt town could be.



Your Town changed Caren's career. After the workshop Caren continued to lead the Revitalization Task Force, working as a volunteer at least thirty hours a week. In summer 1995, just as she was planning to leave town in search of paid employment, Caren was offered the position of flood grants coordinator for Montezuma, a job she has thrived in. "*Your Town* changed what I wanted to do; I found a niche in the world for me that I loved."

As flood grant coordinator, Caren oversaw every aspect of facade restoration and streetscape improvement in Montezuma. She was a steady presence in the downtown, supervising the removal of facade materials, the painting of bricks, and the erection of new awnings. Not all downtown businesses qualified for historic preservation grants, of course—only those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register. But Caren worked with owners of nonqualifying buildings to improve their appearance nonetheless. One was Carl Adams, owner of his own insurance agency and appraisal firm. After the flood Carl had no intention of relocating in his building on downtown Dooly Street and bought land on the outskirts of town for a new office. He was already talking to the State Department of Transportation about access to his property when Caren was able to persuade him to stay downtown. Although his building did not qualify for historic preservation grant funding, because it had been substantially remodeled in 1992, Carl rehabilitated the building in a compatible way with the advice of a Main Street consultant from the Georgia Trust. Carl removed the cedar-shake mansard roof, applied stucco to the brick, put up a new green-and-white-striped awning, and obtained a variance



for a smaller insurance franchise sign—all at his own expense.

Caren reactivated Montezuma's downtown development authority, which had been defunct since the 1980s, bringing the directors together to educate them about design guidelines, Main Street principles, and heritage tourism—to "show them the possibilities." Caren also began writing articles for the local newspaper about design guidelines, downtown landscaping, and streetscapes, challenging readers to imagine what a grocery store would look like, for example, if its parking lot were located in back. When a McDonald's billboard was about to be erected on a vacant lot across from the railroad depot downtown, at one of the gateways into Montezuma, Caren was able to persuade the city council to pass an off-premise-sign ordinance banning billboards from the downtown development district. She also worked on the passage of a historic preservation ordinance. She invited Pratt Cassity, her small-group leader from *Your Town*, to give a slide presentation in Montezuma on historic preservation. All but one member of the city council saw the slide show, and the next day the historic preservation ordinance was passed.

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES SUCH AS THOSE BY A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND RESULT IN MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive streetscape-improvement project is now under way in Montezuma: The old sidewalks and trees are being removed; new trees and paving will be installed; power lines will be relocated; and parks will be built, including new tennis courts alongside Beaver Creek. All of this physical change might not have been possible, of course, had it not been for the flood grant funding. However, other Georgia communities have been eligible for the same funds, and none has planned or accomplished anything close to what Montezuma has. According to Greta Terrell of the Georgia Trust, in Montezuma “they see preservation and design as part of the solution” of recovery

from the flood. Other flooded communities have not been so insightful.

Carl Adams attributes much of the town’s success to Caren. “She had more foresight than anyone else.” And, Caren attributes much of her own success to *Your Town*. It changed the way she looked at the world, and it changed her life’s work. In the summer of 1997 she was hired by the nearby town of Americus to be the executive director of its downtown development authority and director of its Main Street program. In Americus Caren continues the application of the principles she learned at *Your Town*—this time as a preservation professional.



CAREN ALLGOOD AND
GRETA TERRELL TALK WITH
MONTEZUMA’S MAYOR
ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF
FACADE IMPROVEMENT.



CASE STUDY: MORRISVILLE, NEW YORK

BACKGROUND

Nestled in a valley among the rolling hills of central New York is the small village of Morrisville, one square mile in size. A farming community that was once the county seat, Morrisville is currently the site of a State University of New York (SUNY) Agricultural and Technical College. The year-round population of some 1,300 consists of retirees, commuters to larger communities, and employees of the college. The architecture of the Village is predominantly Greek Revival and Italianate, intermingled with various styles of the twentieth century. Most of the structures are single-family, many of which have been converted to rental units serving the student population of approximately 1,000.

In many respects Morrisville is a typical upstate New York village with typical small-town problems. What is not typical about Morrisville is the residents' growing resolve to find the vision and means to solve these problems and to celebrate the place where they live and work.

THE COMMUNITY

The Village has not changed dramatically in recent decades; rather, the change has been incremental and has resulted in a slow deterioration in the overall quality of the community. More and more of the college faculty have chosen to live in neighboring communities, and residents have had





COMPUTER IMAGING CAN HELP COMMUNITIES SEE AND EVALUATE CHANGE BEFORE IT OCCURS.

a sense of inevitable decay. As one of Morrisville's citizens said, "The community suffered from severe apathy.... It was once beautiful in the 1930s to 1950s. Then the boom years came when buildings were torn down, and the community began to decline."

By 1996, however, a number of forces converged to make the community think about its future in a new light. First, the New York State Department of Transportation informed the village that in the next few years they were planning to upgrade Main Street (U.S. Route 20). Many of the citizens were concerned about what an upgrade meant. The last Route 20 road improvements had resulted in the loss of roadside parks and fountains that acted as the village commons. The result was a sixty-foot-wide road through the center of town that was efficient for high-speed traffic but greatly compromised the once pedestrian-friendly center of town.

Second, a number of fires in Morrisville left several gaping holes in the fabric of Main Street where once a church and drugstore had stood. Without design guidelines the community was uncertain and uncomfortable about what new structures would look like. At the same time a plan to build the village's first sewer system was prepared, posing the threat of new development. All this played against a background of simmering town-gown tensions resulting from an increasing number of rental units and a proliferation of bars, parking problems, and crime. Unfortunately, the Village was not prepared to respond to these pressures in a thoughtful manner.

In 1989 the Morrisville Preservation Commission was formed to list Madison Hall—the courthouse when Morrisville was the county seat—in the National Register of Historic Places and to nomi-

nate it as a local historic landmark. Soon, however, the Commission became the voice for design in the community at large. One event in particular prompted Commission members to play a broad activist role. In 1994 a church in a predominantly residential neighborhood in the center of the village burned down, and a proposal was made to rezone the property and renovate a remaining church structure into a plastics-model company. It was a bitter battle—and the company won. However, the experience made the Commission members realize that they needed to become proactive if they wanted to shape the future of their community. In the process of negotiating with the plastics-model company the Commission was able to require some design mitigation measures, and, in fact, the company has proved to be a good neighbor. The community realized that development and economic growth do not have to come at the expense of the quality of life.

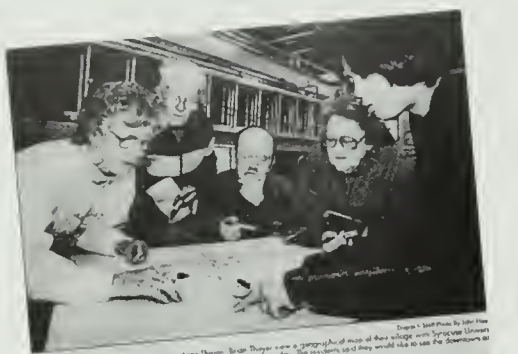
THE YOUR TOWN EXPERIENCE

Luckily for Morrisville Carolyn Gerakopoulos, one of the village's most active citizens and a member of the Commission, participated in the Aurora, New York, *Your Town* workshop in the summer of 1994. Carolyn says, "The workshop was a defining point in my education. It was the best educational experience I have ever had." As the recently elected chair of the Commission she returned home from *Your Town* with new ideas and boundless enthusiasm and was instrumental in moving the village forward.

After the workshop Carolyn continued her contact with Scott Shannon and Cheryl Doble, faculty in the Landscape Architecture Program at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. In the fall of 1995, the

"I looked for information and got more than I could have imagined ... Thanks for wonderful fellowship, friends, new acquaintances, and faculty."

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, 1992



Village residents and college students exchange ideas on improving Morrisville

By Steven Gifford

CHAMBERS, N.Y.

MORRISVILLE, N.Y. —

Residents of Morrisville

have been exchanging ideas

with college students

from the State University of

New York at Morrisville

on ways to improve the

village.

The exchange was part of

a community design

workshop held last week

at the village hall.

The workshop was

organized by the village

and the college.

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Village and faculty together applied for and received a small grant from the New York Planning Federation to develop a planning strategy for the village. Scott and Cheryl used the *Your Town* program and the rural community design studio offered by Scott and Cheryl at SUNY to develop a special project for Morrisville. The project was meant to encourage the community to participate in the design process and to express not only the problems facing the Village but also its aspirations for the future. Public participation was a key issue in Morrisville, where the various issues involved in community design were perceived to have grown increasingly complex. Thus, the project was developed to include the public in a preference survey and all-day design workshop.

The preference survey was developed in order for help the community to identify its positive and negative physical characteristics. Fifty-two slides depicting a range of small-town characteristics typical of the region were shown for seven categories of land-use activity, including agriculture, parking, commercial/retail, academic/institutional, recreation, landmarks/civic space, and residential. The slides were shown to many of the local organizations, including the Lions Club, Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, junior and senior high students, AIDS Task Force, Parent Teacher Organization, the Preservation Commission, and the Senior Nutrition Program. Scott and Cheryl met with each group individually and explained the overall process.

Participants were asked to rate each slide on a scale of negative five (-5) for least preferred to positive five (+5) for most preferred. The results revealed community-wide patterns of likes and dislikes. For example, there was a strong desire for civic open space within the village, possibly a lin-

gering impact from the loss of the median strip on Route 20, and an equally strong negative reaction to commercial strip development.

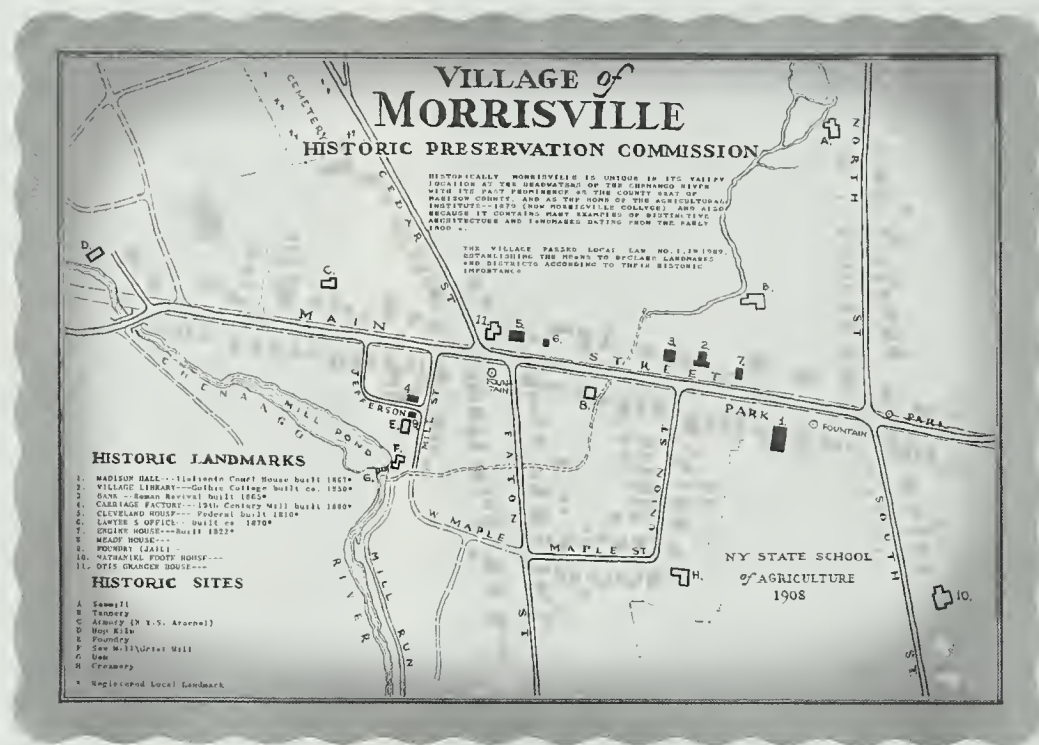
The next step of the project was a workshop that gave people the opportunity to critique and offer opinions of the design of Morrisville. Building on the *Your Town* model, Scott and Cheryl hoped to demystify the design process by giving citizens the confidence to become directly involved in the community's design. Nearly seventy Morrisville residents attended the all-day public design workshop in March 1996. The workshop included a presentation and an evaluation of perspective sketches of design proposals for Main Street, a residential street, and other areas; a presentation and evaluation of a scale model of design alternatives for Main Street (Route 20); and cognitive-mapping exercises of the village. The participants were divided into groups of approximately twenty people who spent about one hour doing each of the exercises.

The perspective sketches illustrated existing conditions and two design alternatives for various places in the village, and participants were asked to rank the sketches in order of preference. For all areas existing conditions were the least preferred. Each sketch was also critiqued and, when appropriate, redesigned with the participants.

The second exercise of the workshop featured a scale model of Main Street, Morrisville. Two design scenarios that could be interchangeably inserted into the model were presented for discussion. All the model pieces were movable so that participants could freely manipulate the design and explore alternatives. The design solution that resulted was, thus, responsive to community preferences and created a sense of ownership in the participants.



SCALE MODELS HELP CITIZENS
VISUALIZE CHANGE AND
INTERACT WITH DESIGN.



PLACEMATS AT LOCAL EATERIES HELP PEOPLE LEARN ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY EVEN WHILE THEY ARE DINING

Finally, a series of cognitive-mapping exercises was developed to reveal what citizens saw as historically, aesthetically, and personally important in Morrisville. The exercise also provided citizens with a map to familiarize themselves with the Village. Large maps of the Village were distributed to allow individuals to highlight the points of discussion with markers. They marked areas that they believed were important to preserve or develop and wrote why these areas are significant. Citizens also recalled missing buildings and abandoned agricultural fields that they had previously forgotten. The workshop was considered a real community success. Cheryl attests, “The Morrisville design workshop was the best I have been involved in, due to the huge turnout of the community.... It provided a shot in the arm.” According to Scott, “The Village Board came out of the experience with a much better idea of what they wanted the community to become.”

CONCLUSION

Preservation Commission members continue to meet almost weekly around the dining-room table at the chair's house. The atmosphere is relaxed, with a tradition of serving cookies fresh out of the oven. The Commission has developed many creative ways to raise the community's awareness of the importance of design. For example, Bob Lambert drew a map of the local landmarks in the Village, which has been printed on paper placemats and sold to restaurants. The placemats, in high demand, serve as a source of income for the Commission and raise the community's awareness of its natural and cultural resources. The Commission has also developed a program for fourth graders that focuses on local history. At most public meetings Commission activist Dennis Sands displays historic photographs and maps of Morrisville. The hope is that all these efforts will cumulatively build the community's sense of place.

Morrisville, today, is a different place from what it was only a few years ago. There is a sense that the community has a greater ability to control its future. Today, for example, there is a new drug-store located on the site of the one that burned down. The first design proposal was for a standard one-story concrete structure. But the new owner, sensing the change in the community's attitude toward appearance, redesigned the building so that it is sympathetic with the scale and materials of the existing Main Street. According to Commission member Sands, “The key is patience, will power, never giving up, and having an inspired leader such as Carolyn.”

CONCLUSION

The *Your Town: Designing Its Future* program was developed out of the concern of the National Endowment for the Arts for the role of design in shaping the future of America's rural communities. Although change in rural America is inevitable, the hope is that the *Your Town* program has heightened participants' awareness of the importance of design in managing that change. The design process can be a wonderful vehicle for energizing an apathetic citizenry. Design is proactive and gives people a sense of empowerment and hope so often missing in rural communities.

The case studies presented here demonstrate how individuals with some basic design education and a commitment to teach others can make a profound difference in the appearance of their communities. Design alone will not turn a community around or save it from unwanted change. But combined with other community-building initiatives such as comprehensive planning, historic preservation, and economic restructuring design can provide a catalyst for community social and economic revitalization.

Based on the *Your Town* workshops and the experiences of the participants in applying the design process in their own communities, several principles emerge.



Good community design:

- ▶ must include a broad base of *public participation*
- ▶ does *not cost more!* All communities can afford good design
- ▶ is *comprehensive* and takes into consideration all local cultural and natural features.
- ▶ is *indigenous* and must reflect the values and character of the local community
- ▶ will not happen in a vacuum but requires *local leadership* that is committed to design and recognizes its importance
- ▶ is *slow and incremental* and requires long-term patience and tenacity.

The hope is that through continued *Your Town* workshops these principles can be applied to more and more rural communities across the country.



“The information presented has given me the tools to participate in the design process with confidence.... The workshop dispels any timidity about participating....”

CASA GRANDE, ARIZONA, 1995

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WHERE TO GET DESIGN ASSISTANCE

Following is a list of selected organizations and agencies that provide information and technical assistance in rural community design and planning.

American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
202-626-7300

American Planning Association
1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-872-0611

American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-3736
202-898-2444

The Conservation Fund
1800 North Kent Street, Suite 1120
Arlington, VA 22209
703-525-6300

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127
202-565-1200

National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-588-6000

Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, DC 20013-2890
202-720-3210

Scenic America
21 Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-4300

Faculty of Landscape Architecture
State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Syracuse, NY 13210-2787
315-470-6544

USDA Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090
202-205-1760

LIST OF *YOUR TOWN: DESIGNING ITS FUTURE* WORKSHOPS HELD TO DATE

Bozeman, Montana
Gallatin Gateway Inn
September 29-October 2, 1991

Nashville, Tennessee
Hachland Hill Vineyard
August 27-29, 1992

Prescott, Arizona
Hassayampa Inn
May 20-22, 1993

Aurora, New York
Wells College
August 11-13, 1994

Helen, Georgia
Unicoi Lodge
November 30 - December 2, 1994

Casa Grande, Arizona
Francisco Grande Hotel
January 12-15, 1995

Americus, Georgia
First United Methodist Church
July 14-15, 1995

Charleston, Oregon
Oregon Institute for Marine Biology
August 24-26, 1995

Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania
McGee's Main Street Inn
October 29-31, 1995

Lawrence, Kansas
Eldridge Hotel
November 16-18, 1995

Helen, Georgia
Unicoi Lodge
December 4-6, 1995

Nebraska City, Nebraska
The Lied Conference Center
May 8-10, 1997

Sublimity, Oregon
Silver Falls State Park
May 18-21, 1997

Prescott, Arizona
Hassayampa Inn
May 22-24, 1997

Franconia, New Hampshire
Red Coach Inn
June 15-17, 1997



THIS PUBLICATION WAS PRODUCED FOR
THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

THIS PUBLICATION WAS JOINTLY PREPARED BY THE:

National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

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Designed by:
Christine M. Beaulieu
Mosseau Beaulieu Graphic Design
Cicero, New York 13039

*Printed on recycled paper by: Syracuse Lithographing, Syracuse, New York 13204



Sewage Disposal

Cem

NORTH

P L A I N V I L L E

BM 185

BM 191

BM 192

Plainville Stadium

Drive-in Theater

220

BM 197

72

PENN CENTRAL RIVER

Hamlin Pond

WOODFORD

Linden Street Sch

Jr High Sch

Sewage Disposal

E BROAD ST

High Sch

Plainville

188

TOMLINSON AVE
DIAMOND AVE

STILLWELL

Trask Sch

Quinnipiac

SUNSET ROCK STATE PARK

TRAIL
Quarry


Bradley Mtn

METACOMET

84

a

Trailer Park



*"This is a brilliant and generous project
that is very much needed and very much
appreciated. Architecture and design seem
to be so misunderstood and taken for
granted. This workshop awakened an
awareness and stimulated an appreciation
otherwise left dormant."*

SILVER FALLS STATE PARK,
OREGON, 1997